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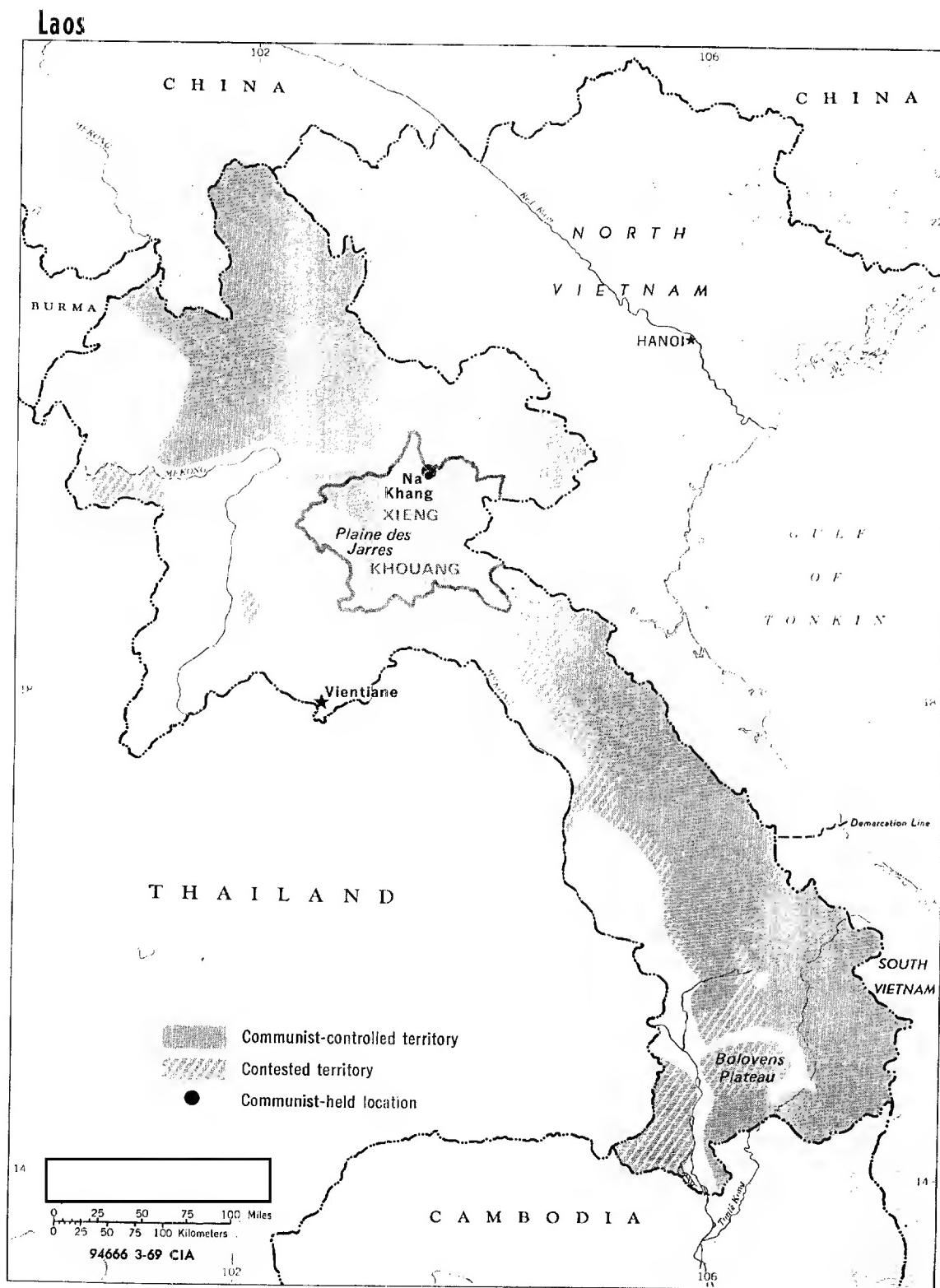
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Laos: Prime Minister Souvanna has had second thoughts about a proposed government counteroffensive in the northeast.

On the advice of Lao military leaders and US advisers, Souvanna has withdrawn his endorsement of Meo leader Vang Pao's ambitious plan to capture a number of Communist positions near the Plaine des Jarres in order to blunt the North Vietnamese "offensive" in Xieng Khouang Province. Citing the lack of resources to carry out such an undertaking, Souvanna has asked Vang Pao to step up harassment against the enemy with troops under his command, while at the same time establishing a new defensive line north of the Plaine des Jarres.

In addition to reflecting a relatively sober appraisal of the military realities, Souvanna's decision suggests that Lao fears concerning current Communist objectives in the northeast have waned somewhat in the two weeks since the fall of Na Khang. The enemy's failure thus far to follow up with a major effort against remaining government positions in northern Xieng Khouang probably has been an important contributing factor. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] (Map)

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USSR-Israel: Moscow is again permitting a limited number of Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel.

Jewish emigration was almost completely stopped at the time of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. The flow has resumed in recent months.

[redacted] the number permitted to leave since the fall has risen substantially, and that recent emigrants have not been limited to hardship cases and have included all ages and professions. According to the latest figures available, the flow returned late last fall to its pre-war levels of about 100-200 per month, but rose sharply to 231 for the first two weeks in January.

The USSR probably hopes that, by permitting increased but still very limited emigration, it can develop some leverage to encourage the Israelis to take a more flexible attitude toward proposals for a Middle East settlement. The regime may also see advantages in ridding itself of some potential troublemakers.

Moscow's failure to publicize the liberalization of its emigration policy undoubtedly results from the desire to avoid damaging relations with the Arab states. This nevertheless limits the credit which it can expect to win.

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